

MISSOURI CONSERVATIONIST

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Serving Nature & You



Vantage Point

Bringing Everyone to the Outdoors

Enjoying Missouri's outdoors brings me countless hours of enjoyment and evokes an important sense of perspective to life's challenges. Albert Einstein put it simply, "Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better."

Our natural world provides many sensations that we each experience differently. For those with disabilities, outdoor experiences are frequently shaped by the quality of opportunities available.

Accessibility to the outdoors jumped on my radar screen shortly after my high school graduation, when a close friend and a fellow Current River explorer was permanently injured in an auto accident. He worked hard for many months to improve and return to the river, but it was only possible with the assistance of dedicated friends and family.

Part of the Conservation Department's mission carries an expectation that all citizens are given the opportunity to use, enjoy and learn about fish, forest and wildlife resources. The words "all citizens" are profound and challenging.

Even before the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Department was evaluating the accessibility of conservation properties. Eventually, we realized that to truly understand accessibility issues we should consult Missourians with physical and mental challenges to learn more about their desires.

For more than ten years, the citizen-led Disabled Accessibility Advisory Council has actively guided Department decisions on new construction and renovation projects from the viewpoint of people with disabilities. The group's insight challenges us to exceed ADA guidelines wherever possible, and their ideas enhance the usability of hundreds of conservation facilities.

Many areas across Missouri now provide premier disabled fishing access. Good examples of these areas are James A. Reed Memorial Wildlife Area near Kansas City and Cooper Creek Access at Lake Taneycomo.

Similarly, statewide hunting opportunities abound through recognition of method exemptions, specially



Bill Smith of Nevada fishes from a disabled-accessible jetty at Bois D'Arc Conservation Area near Springfield.

designed waterfowl blinds and deer stands, or by specially focused managed hunts for people with disabilities. Many accessible hunts are located on our conservation areas, but others are held in conjunction with the Missouri State Park System, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as well as numerous county governments.

Conservation programs are also expanding accessibility. Many interpretive programs accommodate participants with hearing loss (see article on page 4), including the Department's annual Family Outdoor Skills Camp for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children held in partnership with the Missouri Conservation Agents Association and the Missouri School for the Deaf.

To learn more about accessible trails, hunting and viewing blinds, fishing docks, boat ramps, shooting ranges and other facilities near you, I encourage you to contact a Department office or explore our online Conservation Atlas (www.missouriconservation.org).

Whenever the Department receives a letter of thanks for providing extra accommodations for the disabled, I am reminded of my friend and the power of the Current River to his limited recovery. Every Missourian should have equal opportunity to discover their own outdoor experience, and we hope to make more outdoor memories accessible in the future.

John D. Hoskins, Director

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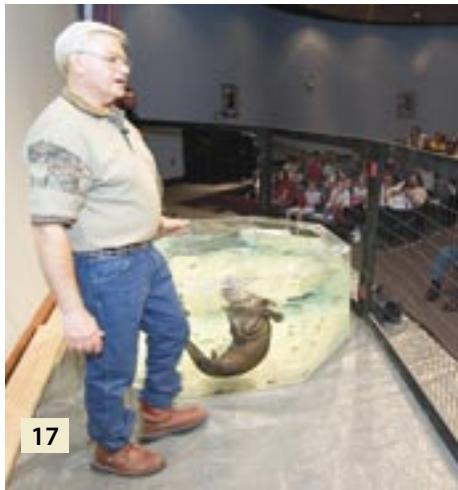
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Reflections

UNSTICKING TICKS

To remove a tick, put a container of water over it. It will release because it is drowning. I learned this from my mom and dad years ago.

Curt James, Lexington

NOT SO FAST

I find it humorous that a reader suggested we protect wildlife from fast food. As long as squirrels and deer and birds and fish don't take up the habit of watching TV, playing video games or using the Internet, they are quite safe from any detrimental effects from our modern society. Outside of hunting and fishing, that is.

D.C. Mueth, St. Clair

CCC BOY

I read your article on the Youth Conservation Corps with great interest.

Over 70 years ago, I was one of those CCC boys. Today, as I drive through the Black Hills of South Dakota and see the



HEADWEAR FOR HUMMINGBIRDS

Walter Peterson of St. Louis has applied for a patent on the Wearable Birdfeeder, a personal hummingbird blind. Wearing prototypes that show the development of the self-named Bird-Brain's invention are Dan Governick (middle) of Iron County and his grandsons, Graeson (left) and Braedin Bullington (right).

huge ponderosa pines marching up the hillsides, my heart swells with pride, knowing I thinned the jack pines to leave the best trees to grow.

I found one discrepancy in the article. We got \$30 a month, not \$30 a week. We were left with \$5 a month after \$25 went home to our parents. Even so, the \$30 a month was more than the \$21 per month we got from the military at the outbreak of WWII.

Arnold Benson, Jasper

WELL-READ

I want to let you know how impressed I have been by how widely and thoroughly read the *Conservationist* is. Since April, when you published my article "Spring Rains," I have received acknowledgment from so many people I did not previously know but who recalled the article.

Examples include a mother and daughter celebrating Mother's Day at Big Spring Picnic Area in the valley I

wrote about; the owner of a health-food store who noticed the name on my credit card; the counter clerk at the post office who remembered my photograph; two women restoring a glade who wanted to come and see what we are doing here.

In addition, people who did know me—guests at our retreat center, the women's nature book club I belong to, neighbors at the voluntary fire department, friends who love to steward the land they own—also mentioned the article.

Although this was a nice boost for me, even more gratifying was to know that so many people enjoy reading about Missouri wildlife and are as proud to live here as I am.

Sara Firman-Pitt, Ozarks

CONSERNOMICS

Your "Consernomics" article didn't mention a very important renewable resource. Trapping and hunting of furbearers for their pelts and meat adds millions to the state's economy.

The business of trapping animals that are causing damage also is growing each year, especially in urban areas.

Freddie Cox, St. Clair

I read your magazine habitually to learn what I can about wildlife, however, I was disappointed in your "Consernomics" story. As I see it, wildlife is priceless.

Jamie Senghetser, Imperial

BIRD ID

I am wondering what the name of the bird is that is pictured in the upper left photo on page 30 of the June issue.

I have seen them on my farm for several years but have been unable to identify them.

Marvin Mercer, Grant City

Editor's note: That's a bobolink. Here are some sites which may be helpful: www.missouriconversation.org.

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[org/nathis/birds/birdatlas/main/text/0400012.htm](http://nathis/birds/birdatlas/main/text/0400012.htm) and www.mbrpwrc.usgs.gov/id/framlst/i4940id.html.

GREEN ANGLERS

Jim Rathert's article on green herons was informative and, of course, included superb wildlife photos.

Every summer, residents around the mini-lake in Kirkwood's city park include a couple of blue and green herons. They win the prize for the most patient of anglers, with the possible exception of Mr. Brown.

F. Richard Boeneker, St. Louis

TANGLED

If you look closely at the cover photo of the green heron, it appears that he may be caught up in fishing line.

A recent issue covered the hazards of discarded fishing line. Just a reminder to all fishermen and women, please do not discard your broken or tangled fishing line on the bank or in the water. Place it in your pocket instead.

J. Roger Darting, Kansas City

Editor's note: The photographer said it wasn't fishing line but a string of filamentous algae. However, your point is well-taken.

The letters printed here reflect readers' opinions about the Conservationist and its contents. Space limitations prevent us from printing all letters, but we welcome signed comments from our readers. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Ask the Ombudsman



Q. I recently dug a drainage ditch and found a strange, small critter in the water that is about six inches long and about the diameter of a pine needle. It swims like a snake, stays submerged and does not appear to have a head. Can you tell me what it is?

A. What you're describing sounds like a horsehair worm, also called a hairsnake or Gordian worm. This unique invertebrate is a parasite, but not of humans, livestock or pets. The adult hairworms mate and lay eggs in the water. The eggs hatch into tiny larvae that form a cyst in plants. A plant-eating insect (such as cricket, grasshopper or beetle) ingests the cyst, which later frees the larvae to mature into an adult.

For more information, check out these Web sites: www.uky.edu/Agriculture/Entomology/entfacts/struct/ef613.htm, <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/2000/2112.html>, www.extension.umn.edu/projects/yardandgarden/ygbriefs/e614horsehair.html.

WILLIAM R. ELLIOT



Horsehair worm

Ombudsman Ken Drenon will respond to your questions, suggestions or complaints concerning Conservation Department programs. Write him at P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180, call him at 573/522-4115, ext. 3848, or e-mail him at Ken.drenon@mdc.mo.gov.

Silent World of Nature

The deaf and hard of hearing have ways to appreciate the outdoor world.

By Sheri Medlock ▲ EVER WONDER how you would experience nature if you were unable to hear? Think about what you might or might not see.

Would you be able to identify a bird in the distance or in a dense forest? Would you know whether there was running water nearby? Would you be oblivious to a gobbling turkey until it came into sight?

Many treasures in nature are well-hidden, and sounds may give important clues to them. The challenge for people who are deaf or hard of hearing in this landscape is that they must use other clues to discover these treasures.

When things are quiet, you would be amazed by how much detail you notice in the web of life around you. Most helpful is knowing where to look and what you can expect to find. Having a basic knowledge about nature is essential.

Knowing hibernation, breeding and hatching seasons, for instance, will improve your success in locating



1 Rockwoods Reservation

Phone: 636/458-2236, ext. 0

"Let's Go Caving!"

Date: Saturday, October 1

Time: 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

2 August A. Busch Memorial Conservation Nature Center

Phone: 636/441-4554

"A Day With The Naturalist: Ted Shanks Conservation Area"

Location: Meet at August A. Busch

Date: Saturday, November 12
Time: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

3 Runge Conservation Nature Center

Phone: 573/526-5544

"A Day With The Naturalist: Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area"

Location: Meet at Runge Nature Center

Date: Saturday, November 5

Time: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

4 Springfield Conservation Nature Center

Phone: 417/888-4237

"Trees of Missouri"

Date: Sunday, October 16

Time: 1 – 3 p.m.

"A Day With The Naturalist: Nature Jaunt"

wildlife. Studying habitat requirements and daily activity patterns for wild species also is useful.

If you are looking for bullfrogs, you might start by locating likely habitat, such as a permanent body of water with a muddy bottom (for winter burrowing). Then you would search for your quarry between spring and fall, when bullfrogs are most active. If you know that bullfrogs are most skittish during the day and more easily approached at night, you can further improve your chances and the quality of your observations.

Using clues of behavior and habitat, learning to read signs and tracks, and focusing more on the colors, scents and textures of nature can improve the experience of all outdoor enthusiasts—not just those who are deaf or hearing-impaired.

It is a good exercise to cover your ears so that you can focus on the sights and scents of nature.

We invite you to join in any of the Conservation Department's hands-on, specialized programs for the deaf and hard of hearing and their families and friends. These programs, presented in sign language, are offered throughout the state. Themes of programs, dates and times are listed here. To sign up for a program, please call the site where they are offered.

We look forward to sharing nature with you!

Date: Sunday, December 4
Time: 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

5 Discovery Center Urban Conservation Campus

Phone: 816/759-7300

"Woodworking for Wildlife"

Date: Saturday, October 8

Time: 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

"Nature's Palette"

Date: Saturday, December 3

Time: 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

6 Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center

Phone: 816/228-3766

"Family Fishing"

Date: Saturday, August 13

Time: 9 – 11 a.m.

"A Day With The Naturalist: Bodies of Water"

Date: Tuesday, August 23 OR
Thursday, August 25
Time: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

"Butterflies"

Date: Saturday, September 17

Time: 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

"Owl Be Seeing You"

Date: Saturday, October 22

Time: 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

"Aw Nuts!"

Date: Saturday, November 26

Time: 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

"A Day With The Naturalist: Birds at Cooley Lake"

Location: Meet at Burr Oak Woods

Date: Saturday, December 17

Time: 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

"Animal Signatures"

Date: Saturday, December 31

Time: 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.



Programs for the hard of hearing show how nature appeals to all our senses.





The aerial photo of my 60-acre "farm" lying in front of me on the kitchen table held the answer. I just hadn't noticed it before.

I was studying the photo, not to determine the favorite haunts of the turkey on the farm, but to figure out how to attract more quail.

I'd colored the fields converted last year to warm season grass mixtures blue, and the brushy draws with hard-core winter cover light pink. I made the brood-rearing mixture of bare ground, lespedeza and annuals bright yellow. The small plots of grain, milo and wheat, which also contained a good dose of weed seeds, were green.

Nothing was missing, except for a steady crop of quail. I'd seen an occasional covey, but not the three to four coveys a year I wanted. The photo told me why.

Although my land was now quail-friendly, thanks in large part to technical advice of the local NRCS staff, the surrounding land was not. In the aerial photo, my land seemed to stand out like a raisin in a bowl of oatmeal. I wondered how the quail could ever find the 60 acres that I'd prepared so well for them.

A quick call to Tom Dailey, the Conservation Department biologist leading quail research efforts, provided an answer.

"While a covey can find all it needs on as little as 10 acres, sustaining a population over time requires a much larger piece of land. And it must have the right mix of habitats. With Missouri's mix of unpredictable winters, hot summers and toad-strangler rains, the best way to consistently have a reasonable number of quail is to manage at least 800 acres," Tom said.

Last time I checked, my banker was not about to lend me enough

Calling All QUAIL!

Property owners can join together to create landscapes attractive to quail.

by Eric Kurzejeski



JIM RATHERT

Landowners are learning that having quail habitat on their neighbors' farms helps increase covey numbers on their own property.

money to buy 740 more acres. But, who needs a loan when you have neighbors?

I remembered how landowners had cooperated in the late 1950s to make Missouri's turkey restoration successful.

At that time, biologists believed wild turkey required at least 10,000 acres of contiguous habitat containing a mix of timber and grassland to survive.

People who wanted their land considered for a turkey release had to work with their neighbors to sign up 10,000 acres of private land. Only after landowners had agreed to work together were sites evaluated for restoration.

I wondered whether landowners ever cooperated in the same way on behalf of quail.

Nick Prough, private lands conservationist for the Missouri

Department of Conservation, and Tom Lampe, West Central Missouri Quail Unlimited Chapter chairman both told me about a cooperative quail habitat effort among some Cass County landowners.

About five years ago, these two men noticed that they had four active quail habitat projects going on in one section of Cass County. The projects were successful on their own. For example, Stephen Riffle, a landowner in the county, said he went from two coveys to eight in one year after edge feathering and other habitat work.

Nick and Tom felt that if they could link those projects by building

a network of Cass County landowners and partners interested in quail management, it would be like putting more raisins in the oatmeal.

For their plan to work, they had to have more landowners who wanted to manage for quail and the help of local USDA leaders and the farm programs they managed. They also needed to provide the equipment and technical advice for landowners who needed help.

They started small, with Tom knocking on neighbors' doors to see whether they wanted more quail. If they did, Tom and Nick studied their land and suggested management practices that would benefit

both the landowner and quail.

It wasn't long before these habitat enhancement projects paid off with more coveys. People engaged in quail habitat work placed signs on their land calling attention to their involvement. Tom Taylor, a cooper-
ator, said, "These signs are a great way to show off my project."

The good news about quail management spread quickly through the farming community. Soon, it wasn't hard to find landowners who wanted to start quail habitat projects. The isolated, lone-raisin approach had shifted to landscape-level management.

"Seeing landowners excited about restoring quail makes my job worthwhile," Nick said.

Landowner interest, excitement and support were vital but so were partner support and finding a way for busy landowners to get the work done.

Nick and Tom recruited the local NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service) and FSA (Farm Service Agency) to support quail habitat restoration efforts. Both these federal agencies helped by promoting quail-friendly practices to local landowners.

What started as a two-man team has now exploded into a cooperative effort between landowners, FSA, NRCS, MDC and QU.

"Partnerships are why we have been able to do as much as we have," said Tom Lampe. "Money from Quail Unlimited and landowners, plus state and federal programs is a powerful combination."

Because many landowners don't have the time, equipment or expertise to manage habitats, Nick and Tom also located several reliable local contractors willing to do necessary edge feathering and spraying to enhance habitat conditions.

The results speak for themselves.



*All this began
because someone
took the time to ask
their neighbors to
pitch in and make a
difference for quail.*



Tom Lampe (above left) and Nick Prough drummed up landowner support for edge feathering (upper photo) and other proven quail management practices.

Quail on the Web

Search these sites to learn more about restoring quail on your land.

- ▲ Missouri Department of Conservation
www.missouriconservation.org/landown/wild/quail/
- ▲ The Noble Foundation
www.noble.org/Ag/Wildlife/QuailMngt/Index.htm
- ▲ Southeast Quail Study Group sponsored by Quail Unlimited, The Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and The Southeastern section of The Wildlife Society
www.qu.org/seqsg/nbci/nbci.cfm

They went from four quail habitat projects in Cass County in 2000 to 110 in 2004. Over 17.5 miles of hedgerow have been renovated, 98 CRP contracts have established native warm-season grass, and 3,574 acres are under active management for quail.

Research shows that every acre of habitat work affects 10 surrounding acres by increasing overall habitat suitability. Using this rule of thumb, there have been 35,740 acres affected in Cass County alone since 2000.

Nick and Tom's efforts have not gone unnoticed. The West Central Missouri Quail Unlimited Chapter won the National Quail Habitat Award in 2002 and 2003. The group hopes to receive the prestigious award again this fall for 2004 habitat work completed.

When you get the cooperation ball rolling, it usually ends up snowballing. Cass County is one of two counties in the country that have received a federal grant aimed at building quail habitat through utilization of government programs. This grant provides funds to hire someone who works entirely on quail habitat projects. "This grant



Landowners are proud to be making their farms more hospitable to quail.

has put everything on a larger scale where it will be easier to achieve success," said Nick.

All this began because someone took the time to ask their neighbors to pitch in and make a difference for quail.

If you have trouble calling quail to your land, ask yourself if the "rai-

sin concept" applies to your farm. If it does, talk to your neighbors about quail habitat management. After you've drummed up some interest and support, contact your private land conservationist or your local NRCS office to put a plan in place.

Working together just makes sense. ▲

PHOTOS BY CLIFF WHITE





Bobcat Prowl

Silent, shy and mostly nocturnal, bobcats are steadily increasing their numbers in Missouri.

by Beverly J. Letchworth, photos by Jim Rathert

What is one of the largest wild mammals in Missouri? What large mammal sometimes sleeps on and hunts from tree limbs? What mammal can make leaps up to 10 feet? The answer to all three questions: the bobcat.

The bobcat is found only in North America, where it is the most common wildcat. This handsome animal has tufted ears, a tawny coat with black spots and a ruff of fur that flares from its cheeks and neck.

The bobcat gets its name from its stubby or "bobbed" tail, which is only 4 to 6 inches long. The rest of the cat's body may be from 2 to 4 feet long. Bobcats weigh up to 40 pounds.

Its spotted fur camouflages it well as it hunts for food. Unlike coyotes, for example, which usually trot along when hunting, the bobcat hunts slowly, frequently stopping and sitting for minutes at a time as it studies its environment. It uses its acute sight and hearing more than its sense of smell to find prey.

When the bobcat does spot prey, it lowers itself into a crouch and creeps slowly forward. Bobcats place their front feet down so carefully and noiselessly that their



Bobcats seek remote areas for nurseries or shelters. They may change locations as often as every day.

prey does not hear them coming. Then, as they move forward, they place their hind feet in the same spots, so no extra sound is made. When it's close enough, the bobcat leaps and pulls down the victim with its sharp claws.

"The bobcat's diet is 70 percent rabbit," says Dave Hamilton, a resource scientist and furbearer biologist at the Missouri Department of Conservation's Resource Science Center in Columbia. Bobcat diets also include a variety of small mammals, such as shrews, mice, squirrels and opossums; birds, such

Hunting for Bobcats
About 3,000 bobcats are taken each year by hunters and trappers. Where bobcats are plentiful and in the counties where the practice is legal, they often are hunted using dogs.

Missouri bobcat hunting and trapping season begins Nov. 15 and closes Feb. 15. See the *Wildlife Code* for regulations.

as wild turkeys and quail; and, occasionally, deer.

Because there is too much meat on a deer to eat at one time, the bobcat caches or covers it with ground litter. It may come back and feed on the remains later. However, if other food is plentiful, it may not bother to return for the meat.

Bobcats sometimes prey on domestic stock, such as chickens, turkeys, piglets, sheep and goats, but they're not really a threat to farmers. They may also eat carrion (dead animals) if food is scarce.

These wildcats can live almost anywhere, from swamps, forests and farmlands to scrubby and arid regions, as long as there is some cover to hide in. They often rest in caves or hollow trees and under rock overhangs.

In Missouri, bobcats used to be restricted to the Ozarks and the southern area of the state. Now, Hamilton reports, "There are between 12,000 and 18,000 bobcats in Missouri. They are increasing dramatically." He explains that years ago, when there were many farms, farmers shot any bobcat that happened upon their land, thus reducing their numbers. "But over the years, as families left the farms, bobcats increased and expanded their range in Missouri," says Hamilton. "Bobcats have increased all over the Midwest. There's a small but growing population in Ohio, Illinois and Indiana."

Bobcats are crepuscular, meaning they're most active in the few hours before and after sunset and sunrise. Mostly they remain on the ground but easily take to a tree if chased by dogs, charged by deer, or in need of a rest. They swim well but don't like being in the water.

Bobcats are curious animals. If you followed one, you would see it make a zigzag trail as it investigated its environment.

If you were to find and measure a bobcat track, you would see that it is 2 inches long and without claw marks. Your pet cat's paw print is much smaller—only about 1 inch long. A bobcat's claws retract when not in use, but when hunting and defending itself, they extend to grab, hold and rip.

Territories are important to bobcats. They mark their territories or home ranges with scent contained in scat (feces) or urine. They may urinate on a tree or object, in a scrape in the dirt they made with their paws, or on a small mound of leaves and twigs to create a scent post. They also may leave scat in prominent areas. These markings both tell other bobcats, "This is my territory, do not enter!" and help attract mates.

One scientist found 31 scent posts and two scats in less than a quarter of a mile. No mistaking that bobcat's territory! Bobcats sometimes sharpen their claws by scraping them against a tree or log near a scent mark. This is a double warning, "Do not trespass!"

Although they usually remain quiet, bobcats can make all kinds of sounds, including hisses and growls, yowls and purrs, mews, gurgles and wah-wah calls. During mating season, they're quite noisy, making loud yowls and howls and meows called caterwauling. These sounds can be heard a mile away.

Bobcats live alone, except during the mating season. For only a few days, the male and female stay together. Then the male leaves and goes his own way. Two or three kittens are born 50 to 70 days later in a well-



Bobcat kittens constantly watch their mother to learn to hunt. They are independent by the age of seven months.

hidden place the mother has found—a rock pile, cave, brush pile or hollow tree.

Kittens are blind and helpless. Each weighs about 12 ounces. The female may change dens every one to six days to make sure predators don't find the kittens. She either carries the young to a new site, or if the kittens can walk, leads the way to a new den.

When kittens are between three and five months old, they learn one of the most important lessons of their life—how to hunt. If they can't kill their own food, they won't survive long.

At first, the young follow their mother on hunts to watch her tactics. Later, they practice on their own, rarely taking prey but learning from their mistakes. Finally, by the age of seven months, they know how to hunt and take care of themselves and will leave their mother to find territories of their own. Bobcats live 10 to 17 years.

Missouri's rising bobcat population hasn't had much of an effect on Missourians.

"People are unaware of bobcats," Hamilton says. Because bobcats are usually nocturnal, quiet and elusive, state residents have few opportunities to see or hear them.

Bobcats are prowling our woodlands, however, and they play an important role in our natural world. These skilled predators help keep rabbit and rodent populations in check and add to the wild landscape of Missouri. ▲



Another Wildcat

The bobcat may not be the only wildcat in Missouri. There have been a few sightings of mountain lions in the state since 1994. Before that, the last documented mountain lion sighting in Missouri was in 1927. Mountain lions can weigh from 90 to 160 pounds and are about 60 to 100 inches long.

People who see a bobcat sometimes think they've seen a mountain lion.

"There are many false reports of mountain lion sightings in Missouri," says Hamilton. He added that most of the photos of reported mountain lions have proven to be of bobcats.

Although it has documented a few sightings of mountain lions in Missouri, the Conservation Department does not believe the big cats are breeding and raising families here. The Department is working to determine the current number of mountain lions in Missouri today.

Night-Float Smallmouth





Fish the dead of night to escape the heat and catch big smallmouth.

by Mark Goodwin, photos by Cliff White

“Shhh!

Don't bang the paddle against the side of the johnboat,” my fishing guide, Alex Rutledge, whispered, as we eased into the first bluff hole of our float on the Jacks Fork River, between Rymer's Access and Chalk Bluff. “Big smallmouth are super-wary,” he said. “Noise like that can spook 'em.”

I understood, but was having a hard time avoiding bumping the paddle. It was 10 p.m. and pitch dark.

Behind me I heard the whiz of Alex's buzzbait as it shot through the air, followed by the “blub-blub-blub-blub” of the lure as he worked it across the water's surface. I followed with my own buzzbait efforts. The bluff appeared as a dark shadow looming up from the river. Judging distance in the dark is difficult, so most of my casts fell short.

A slurping sound ended the rhythmic “blub-blub-blub” of Alex's buzzbait. He grunted as he set the hook. “A good one!” he exclaimed as he reeled in line.

I asked Alex whether he needed a light. He declined, saying it would scare the fish.

The bass splashed at boat's edge as Alex lipped it from the water. He laid it on a ruler taped across the seat in front of him. I didn't know how he could see to measure, but he whispered, “Fifteen-and-a-half inches.”

It was a nice smallmouth, but not good enough to stop fishing to take pictures. We were after bigger ones.

For close to three decades I've enjoyed fishing for smallmouth bass on Missouri's Ozark streams. This trip represented my first attempt at a night float for smallmouth. Alex is a regular on the river at night, even guiding other anglers.

For me, the trip was a great introduction to night floating for smallmouth. It's a wonderful approach to summertime fishing.

Avoid the Crowds

Floating one of Missouri's clear Ozark streams on a summer day is lots of fun. The problem is that everyone knows it. From May through September, most of Missouri's premier float streams are packed with canoes, jet boats and tubes, as well as anglers.

For example, one weekend last July, rental services in the Van Buren area put 5,000 tubes and canoes on a 20-mile stretch of the Current River.

That much traffic isn't good for fishing. Clanging canoes, splashing tubers and roaring jet boats often send mature smallmouth bass deep into cover, where they are tough to reach with lures or baits. It's pretty hard for someone to enjoy fishing under such crowded conditions.

Night fishing for big smallmouth on Ozark streams provides lots of solitude. The campsites may be full, but the river is left to you.

Big-Fish Time

During a typical day on most Ozark streams, you usually can catch good numbers of smallmouth bass that

range between 8 and 11 inches long. Bigger smallmouth are rare. The sight of anglers seems to make them stop feeding.

Fishing at night, when the fish have trouble seeing you, generally produces bigger fish. We fished for close to four hours and boated 32 smallmouth, with seven between 12 and

Try buzzbaits. You can hear them working, and they seldom hang up.

16 inches long. Though I was thrilled, our outing was below average by Alex's standards.

"Fifty or so bass, with two or three over 17 inches would have been more up to par," he said.

I wondered whether my trouble making accurate casts in the dark limited our catch. Alex caught many more fish than I did. On the other hand, I think it had something to do with the weather. It was definitely cooler at my end of the boat.

Alex said his best fishing nights occur when daytime

Special Regulations

The author fished a portion of the 26-mile Stream Black Bass Special Management Area on the Jacks Fork, from Hwy. 17 to Hwy. 106.

Special smallmouth bass regulations in this area include an 18-inch minimum length limit and daily limit of one smallmouth. These regulations (more restrictive than the statewide 12-inch, daily limit of six) allow more smallmouth more time in the stream to grow large and improve fishing.

Much of Missouri's stream frontage is privately owned. The establishment of Stream Black Bass Special Management Areas does not give an angler the right to trespass on private land. Please be respectful of stream landowners and ask for permission. —Kevin Meneau

temperatures pass the 90s mark. Under those conditions, mature smallmouth tend to hide during the day and actively feed in the cool of night.

Alex prefers using buzzbaits because they make lots of noise and stay on the surface, where the chances of hangups are fewer. It's fun to hear a buzzbait working in the dark, and even more fun to hear the splash of a bass attacking it.

Other topwater lures, like Zara Spooks or Jitterbugs, also work well, but these sport treble hooks. The single hook of a buzzbait is far less likely to get stuck in streamside cover—or in your skin.

Night-Shift Animals

During a daytime float, you share Ozark streams with an array of birds, from rattling kingfishers to soaring hawks. You often surprise turtles basking on streamside logs and see clusters of swallowtail butterflies sipping water from sandbar puddles.

When the sun sets, a different cast of creatures stirs. Dobsonflies flutter over the water and into your face, and uncountable numbers of lightning bugs blink on and off in streamside vegetation. You sometimes hear beavers slapping their tails on the water or the trill of nearby screech owls.

I also wondered about snakes. While we fished, Alex made a point of never using a flashlight. But, when we headed to shore for a break, he gave me one and told me to watch where I walked. "Cottonmouths stir on this river at night," he said.

I heeded his warning.

Safety

Boat control is essential when floating at night. Alex grew up boating and fishing on the river so we never had any trouble, even in stretches of fast water.

Anyone planning a night float for smallmouth on one of Missouri's Ozark streams needs strong boating skills and familiarity with the stretch of river they intend to float.

Alex said that, even if you know a section of stream well, you should first float it during the day before a night float. Streams change constantly, and a downed tree jammed at the end of a shoal can serve up a nasty surprise.

We pulled off the river around midnight, but I couldn't help thinking how much fun it would be to combine fishing and camping on the river. You could swim or just be lazy in the shade during the day and then set up a float that ended at a campground early in the morning.

What fun! ▲

Farewell * TO THE * Otter Show

*After a long
successful series,
the show's sleek
stars are retiring
from the stage.*

BY JIM LOW



CLIFF WHITE

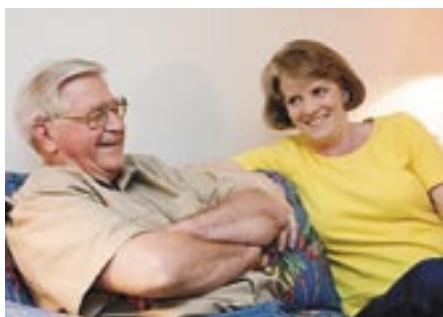
Otterman Glenn Chambers and his cast performed their last show at Runge Conservation Nature Center on April 17.

The auditorium at Runge Conservation Nature Center brimmed with visitors and buzzed with excitement April 17. The crowd ranged from infants to seniors.

Everyone hushed when the lights dimmed, but when the star of the show, a 4.5-foot-long river otter named Splash, made his appearance, they couldn't contain their excitement. "Ohs" and squeals of sheer delight filled the room as the veteran performer swam, frolicked and snuggled his way into their hearts.

Supporting actors in this show were Glenn and Jeannie Chambers, who have brought otter mania to Missouri audiences for more than 13 years. For them

and many at the Runge Center that April afternoon, the event was tinged with melancholy. This was the last public appearance for the Chambers and their otters.



Glenn's and Jeannie's lives have been changed by the needs of their otters.

For Glenn and Jeannie, otter shows have been more than a way to promote conservation. They have been a way of life. Not that they really needed to fill time. Jeannie is a full-time oncology nurse. Glenn's 35-year career has included stints as a wildlife manager, a research biologist, a cinematographer, a regional director and corporate photographer for Ducks Unlimited and frequent contributor to *Audubon*, *National Wildlife*, *Ranger Rick* and other magazines.

Technically, Glenn retired from the Conservation Department in 1995. However, that hasn't kept the couple from making films for the National Geographic Society, operating a hunting club and curing dozens of country hams each year. Of all the things they do, however, otters consume the most energy.

They got into the otter business in 1992, but public appearances were not part of the plan. Glenn was working on three films for the Conservation Department. He thought footage of otters would make a good addition to all three, so he spent \$2,000 of his own money to buy a four-day-old female otter—its eyes not yet open—from a trapper in Louisiana. He named the tiny ball of fur "Paddlefoot."

To ensure the baby otter would accept him as its parent, Glenn slept with Paddlefoot for three months.



Glenn, who made wildlife films for the Conservation Department, filmed his otters for a *National Geographic* film.



To give Paddlefoot some companionship and reduce demands on their own time, the Chambers bought a second female otter puppy, Babyfoot, in 1993.

Glenn turned their back yard in Columbia into an otter playground and set aside his personal life to a degree that even parents of human children might find excessive.

"Two otters equals five boys any day," said Glenn, who with Jeannie raised five sons of their own. "These little guys are nonstop, spring-wound. Kids grow up and eventually go out and start doing things on their own. Otters remain dependent on you. They want to be close to you all the time. It's constant maintenance—mixing food, cleaning their swimming tanks, playing with them. It never ends. You go to sleep and you see otters in your dreams, and you wake up thinking about otters."

After hearing about his otters, the manager of Runge Conservation Nature Center asked Glenn to bring Paddlefoot in for people to see. The reaction was tremendous, and before they knew it, the Chambers

CLIFF WHITE



The otter show fascinated thousands of kids and adults and turned them into lifelong otter fans.

were doing live-otter programs on a weekly basis. They once performed 44 times in 11 days.

At first, they let the otters run loose among the audience. But, as the otters aged and grew larger and more aggressive, this became impractical. They built a wire pen, then designed a Lucite water tank for the otters to swim in onstage. Eventually, they had to buy a Chevrolet Suburban and a big cargo trailer to carry all the gear they used in shows.

Then things got really crazy. Glenn was working on a *National Geographic* film and needed more otters—10 more.

"That was a major zoo," recalls Glenn. "We had just bought two new otter puppies to replace Paddlefoot and Babyfoot on the performing circuit. They didn't even have their eyes open."

"I was babysitting those two, plus the circuit otters. The babies had to be fed every four hours. Jeannie would leave the house at 4:30 in the morning in her coveralls and feed the *National Geographic* otters at a facility near Ashland. Then she would change clothes and go to work in Jefferson City. She would stop on her way home and feed them again."

When Jeannie got home in the evening, she took over with the babies while Glenn went to film "the *Geographic* otters" from 9 p.m. until midnight or 1 a.m. "That was our daily routine from Jan. 17 to Aug. 13," Jeannie said. "When I think about it now, I wonder 'How in the world did we pull it off?'"



Glenn and Jon McRoberts handled the otters during shows.



Retirement leaves Glenn more time for decoy carving.

People who attend the Chambers' live-otter programs often approach them afterward, saying they want their own "pet" otters. "I tell them, 'No you wouldn't,'" Glenn said. "These are not pets. They are a liability any way you cut it, and I have the scars to show for it!"

Male otters are more manageable than females. Females revert to their wild nature when they reach about two years of age. After that, they are aggressive and dangerous.

Even the Chambers, who hand-reared their otters from puppies, are not immune to attack as the animals mature. Glenn's arms and hands bear the marks of many bites. Babyface, one of the Chambers' second pair of otters, was only two years old when she bit Jeannie on the throat, barely missing her carotid artery.

Besides not having the disposition to be pets, otters are enormously expensive to keep. Buying one is just the beginning. Captive otters require special equipment and veterinary care. They eat a mixture of 96-percent lean ground sirloin, shredded carrots, commercial mink meal, tomato juice, eggs, cod liver oil and whole fish. Feeding them costs more than \$4,000 per otter annually.

Several things led the Chambers to end their otters' performing careers. For one thing, Jon McRoberts, the MU graduate student who has been their indispensable assistant, will graduate in December and leave to pursue his own career. Splash and Slide also are at the end of their manageable years on the road.

Finally, Glenn and Jeannie both admit that they've grown tired of the grind. They've had



Their stage career over, Splash and Slide will spend their retirement years at the Chambers' residence.

just one vacation in 13 years. "The Boys," as they call the otters, will still require daily attention, but Glenn and Jeannie plan to take day trips within Missouri and develop other interests. Glenn has become an avid sporting clays shooter.

Captive otters live up to 19 years. When the Chambers' four previous show otters became too aggressive and unmanageable for performances, they placed them in zoos, but the separations were wrenching for everyone. One otter died not long after leaving. Glenn, a hard-nosed biologist who is not prone to make animals into people, is certain the cause was a broken heart.

"That's not going to happen again," said Glenn. "Splash and Slide will stay with us until they die of old age."

Splash's last program marked the end of an era, but it coincided with the start of a new one. The intensive restoration effort for which the Chambers' otters were poster children has succeeded beyond everyone's wildest dreams. Missourians now routinely see otters in the

wild, something that was impossible 20 years ago.

"It has been a good run," said Glenn. "We'll miss the smiles and laughter of the crowds, but there's a lot of satisfaction in knowing we played a part in an important story." ▲

The Otter Message

Although the Chambers' live-otter programs were tremendous fun, they also delivered three educational messages:

- ▲ River otters are wonderful animals that were eliminated from Missouri by unregulated trapping and habitat destruction.
- ▲ The Conservation Department brought otters back through a major restoration effort and now manages their numbers through a carefully regulated trapping season.
- ▲ Otters are not pets. "They don't want to be petted. They don't want to be held," said Glenn. "They just want to be otters."





The Joys of Dove Hunting

by Mark Goodwin, photos by Cliff White

Dove season serves up fine time afield.

“MARK, IT’S RAINING HARD OUTSIDE,” my wife, Lisa, said. “Are you still going dove hunting?”

“Yes,” I responded. “I’ve got rain gear. Anyway, it might stop raining, and there’s no lightning.”

“Well, enjoy yourself,” she said, “though I can’t possibly see how.”

As I drove to my hunting spot through steady showers, I thought about my wife’s comment. To someone who has never hunted doves, sitting outside in the rain for several hours probably seems silly. But to dove hunters, it makes perfect sense. I could think of a lot of rewards for taking part in dove season, regardless of the weather.



Dove hunting teaches kids hunting basics. Lessons are usually intense.

Change of Seasons

Dove season opens with summer on the wane. Though still dishing out heat and drought, summer starts to lose its grip in early September. Early fall arrives with cool, north breezes. For a dove hunter, sitting on a bucket, tucked in a fencerow overgrown with sassafras and sumac, those first cool breezes are a welcome harbinger of more fall days to come.





The cooler air and shorter days also prompt the sumac and sassafras to sport hues of crimson and orange. Fields take on more color from ironweeds, goldenrods and asters.

If dove action is slow, it's fun to watch monarch butterflies sipping nectar from fall flowers. The migrating butterflies seem in no hurry, yet on their way to overwinter in central Mexico they may travel up to 2000 miles.

Migrating nighthawks may wing overhead in loose flocks numbering more than a hundred. Below your feet, untold numbers of grasshoppers and crickets chirp and trill. Witnessing these seasonal events makes dove hunting a pleasure, regardless of whether you bag any birds.

Wing-Shooting Challenge

Dove hunting is made to order for those who enjoy wing shooting. It provides fast action and lots of challenge. A dove with a stiff wind at its tail and a desire to leave the vicinity represents an extremely elusive target.

Part of the pleasure of dove hunting comes from getting ready for such shots through pre-season clay-target shooting. Friends often gather to shoot clay birds at skeet or sporting clay ranges or in back pastures.

No matter how much you practice, you'll still shake your head over missed shots. A limit (12) of doves taken with a box and a half of shells represents good shooting for most hunters.

Gun-dog Training

In Missouri, most hunters who own gun dogs own them for hunting either waterfowl or quail. Dove season opens a full two months before these seasons, providing a peerless opportunity to give the dog extra field training and polish its obedience, retrieving and bird handling skills.

An adage in training bird dogs and retrievers is that bird contact, properly applied, cures practically any problem a gun dog may have. It's true, and dove season can provide you with all the birds you need.

The author accepts a retrieved bird. Dogs learn by repetition during the fast action in a dove field.

DOVE HUNTING ETHICS

A good dove hunt often involves lots of shooting, resulting in plenty of spent shotgun shells. Don't leave them on the ground. Pick up your litter. You can store them in the same boxes they came in or pick up a spent-shell bag from nomoretrash.org.

If you are hunting on private property, be sure you and the landowner are clear about exactly where you can hunt without disturbing livestock.

Young cattle are often being weaned in fall. They are already upset, and a dove hunter shooting close to their location might startle them enough that they run through a fence. Farmers appreciate your concern about their livestock.



Dove hunting, which can be as simple as driving to a field and sitting on a bucket, enables everyone to participate.



Taking your retriever or pointing dog dove hunting nearly doubles the time afield that you get to enjoy with your canine hunting partner. Any opportunity that offers you more time to watch your gun dog complete what it was bred for, and what it has been trained for, serves as a fine reward.

Senior Sport

Time takes its toll on all of us. Muscles, once strong, weaken. Joints stiffen with arthritis. Eyesight fades. These infirmities make some hunting impractical.

At public duck hunting areas, you won't see many hunters 60 years old or older. It just gets to be too much work to walk around in heavy clothing and waders, lugging decoys through freezing water and sucking mud. Following a dog around all day as it hunts for quail also can be very demanding.

Dove hunting is easier, making it a great activity for any senior who still has the desire to raise a shotgun to cheek and track a flying bird.

In fact, many farms that offer good dove hunting have places where you can drive up, park your rig, pull out a lawn chair and enjoy good dove action with minimal physical exertion. It's a good way to "stay in the hunt."

Kids, Too

Dove hunting's fast action and good chance of success also can stir a youngster's interest in hunting.

For your kid's first dove hunt, scout carefully to find dove-rich locations. If your child lacks wing-shooting experience and is struggling to bag fast-flying doves, look for areas where he or she has a chance to bag an easy dove or two.

What you want are young hunters coming home with a few doves that they bagged, doves that they can proudly show off and hold for a photograph, doves they will later enjoy at the dinner table. Handled properly, a

kid's first dove hunt should prove a positive and memorable experience for everyone involved.

Joy for the Table

Doves are a favorite menu item at our dinner table.

I clean doves by clipping off their heads and wings with poultry shears. I then "thumb" the breast from each bird, peel off any clinging skin and feathers and rinse it in cold water.

Grilling dove breasts is tough to beat. Use commercial packets of Italian, orange teriyaki or Caribbean-spiced marinades. After marinating, place the breasts on a hot, charcoal fire, basting frequently with fresh marinade until the meat is medium rare.

We also like to fillet the meat off the breastbone, cut each breast half in two and marinate the meat. We then place it, flanked by chunks of green peppers and onions, on kabob skewers. Again, grill until the meat is medium rare and savor it, as you would all the joys of dove hunting. ▲

A LITTLE HOW-TO INFORMATION

Many conservation areas are managed for dove hunting. To locate these areas, contact your local conservation office or go to www.missouriconservation.org/hunt/dove.

Whether you hunt on public or private ground, the key to finding concentrations of doves is food. Doves are attracted to harvested fields of wheat, sorghum, corn, millet and sunflowers, as well as fields of brush-hogged grass that support lots of foxtail.

Once you locate an area that is attracting large numbers of doves, study how the birds are using the field. They often have predictable flight patterns that can cue you to the best setup for good shooting. The best hunting is usually in early morning and late afternoon, when doves feed.

If a field offers lots of food, doves will use it for weeks. However, if a field is hunted morning and evening, two or three days in a row, doves often abandon it. To keep a spot producing, limit hunting to once a day, and hunt it every other day.



Don't leave anyone at home when planning your dove hunt. The action is fast, and the harvest makes good food.



New name for Discovery Center honors Gorman's conservation legacy

Anita B. Gorman, who joined the Conservation Commission in 1993 and served two six-year terms on the Conservation Department's governing body, was honored in June with the renaming of the former Kansas City Discovery Center as the Anita B. Gorman Conservation Discovery Center.

Mrs. Gorman was the first woman named to the Conservation Commission and served two terms. She chaired the Commission twice during her 12-year tenure.

Current Commission Chairman Lowell Mohler called Mrs. Gorman "the most deserving person to receive such an honor." He noted her "tremendous ability and passion for taking conservation to the next level, especially urban conservation." At the same time, he said, her farming background enabled her to understand the needs of rural Missouri.

"Her great smile and warm, genuine personality helped bring together people of different backgrounds on the Commission and around the state," said Mohler. "Future generations will remember her as the First Lady of Conservation."

Conservation Department Director John Hoskins said Mrs. Gorman's vision for the Discovery Center challenged the agency to think of new ways to deliver conservation in an inner-city environment. She was the project's tireless champion in fund-raising efforts and recruitment of project partners. He said the center that now bears her name surpassed all expectations because of her remarkable talents and dedication.



Anita B. Gorman

Hoskins said Mrs. Gorman maintained a statewide perspective despite her strong ties to Kansas City and pushed the Commission to think broadly, to be fair to all its constituencies and to be loyal to its staff.

"Anita's dedication to the long-term welfare of the Conservation Department is so legendary that we liken her to a mother bear protecting her cubs. She fiercely defended the Commission's authority and its dedicated funding for conservation purposes. Many important projects were completed during her tenure, but her legacy will be the preservation of a national model for conservation."

BOW program offered in September

YMCA of the Ozarks/Trout Lodge and Camp Lakewood in Potosi will hold a "Becoming an Outdoors-Woman" (BOW) program Sept. 16 through Sept. 18. BOW is a popular international program designed for women 18 and older who are interested in learning outdoor skills such as fishing, canoeing, rifle marksmanship, deer and turkey hunting, shotgun skills, kayaking, Dutch-oven cooking, wilderness survival, wildflower identification, orienteering, climbing and horsemanship. To receive a registration form, contact Mariah Hughes, 573/438-2154, ext. 238, mhughes@ymcastlouis.org or Judy Gillam, 573/438-2154, ext. 114, jgillam@ymcastlouis.org.

FALL RV SHOW MOVES to St. Louis Mills

The St. Louis Fall RV Show is moving to the St. Louis Mills shopping mall in Hazelwood. This year's event runs Sept. 9 through Sept. 11. Recreational vehicle dealers will display motor homes, travel trailers, fifth-wheel trailers, folding camping trailers, sport trailers, mini-motor homes, van campers and conversion vans. Admission and parking are free. Show hours are 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. For more information, call 314/355-1236 or visit www.stlrv.com.

Columbia to host trails conference

The second annual Missouri Trail Summit is set for Oct. 27 through 29 at the Stoney Creek Inn, Columbia.

American Trails Executive Director Pam Gluck is the event's keynote speaker. The summit is a statewide forum to learn about and promote trail development, management and use. Representatives from local, state and federal agencies and organizations will discuss issues with trail advocacy groups, planners and trail users.

Attendees can choose from sessions dealing with suburban/urban trails, woodland/natural surface trails, or universal/specialty trails. The International Mountain Bicycling Association will present a one-day, Trail Care Crew workshop on trail design and construction.

The Conservation Department cosponsors the event. For more information, contact Paula Diller, Missouri Park and Recreation Association, 2018 William St., Jefferson City, MO 65109, 573/636-3828.



COMMISSION APPROVES 2005 DEER REGULATIONS

Missouri deer hunters will find a few changes to this year's hunting regulations, but season length and most other details are similar to last year. Deer season dates are:

- ▲ Archery, Sept. 15–Nov. 11 and Nov. 23–Jan. 15.
- ▲ Urban counties portion, Oct. 7–10 in selected counties.
- ▲ Youth portion, Oct. 29–30 (a week earlier than last year).
- ▲ November portion, Nov. 12–22.
- ▲ Muzzleloader portion, Nov. 25–Dec. 4.
- ▲ Antlerless portion, Dec. 10–18.

Availability of antlerless deer permits remains the same as last year, and

antler restrictions instituted last year remain in effect in the same 29 counties. The Conservation Commission may consider expanding the antler restriction trial to additional counties in 2006.

Antler restrictions will be strictly enforced this year. Conservation agents gave hunters some latitude last year because of the newness of the requirement.

Instead of being required to take deer and turkey to physical check stations, hunters will

check deer electronically, either by telephone or with a computer over the Internet. The new rules require hunters to:

- ▲ Write the Telecheck confirmation number on the main portion of a deer or turkey hunting permit and attach it to the animal.
- ▲ Check deer and turkey by 10 p.m. the day they are taken.
- ▲ Check deer or turkeys before leaving the state.

Details of deer and turkey hunting regulations are available at www.missouriconservation.org/hunt/deer/deertuk/ or in the 2005 Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information booklet.

3rd Annual MoBCI Conference

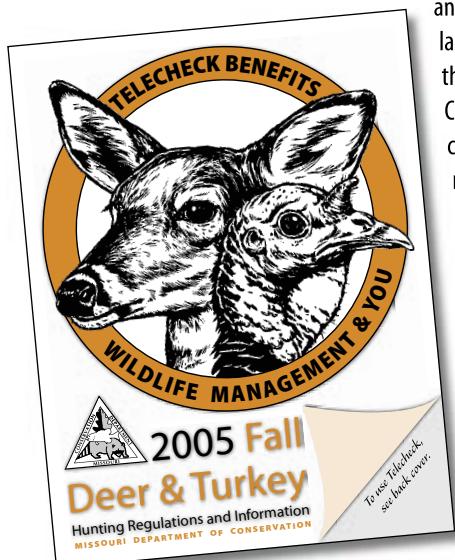
The 3rd Annual Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative (MoBCI) Conference will be Friday evening and Saturday, August 26–27, 2005, at the Holiday Inn Executive Center in Columbia. The conference's theme is "Planning for the Future." It will include presentations on Missouri's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy and use of land data for conservation planning. The keynote speaker will be Robert Abernethy, director of agency programs, of the National Wild Turkey Federation. The common ground and strength that partnerships provide will be emphasized. The Conference also will feature sessions where 2004 MoBCI Grant project managers summarize the progress of their MoBCI-funded projects and provide opportunities for group discussion. MoBCI is a partnership of more than 30 organizations dedicated to the delivery of bird habitat conservation in Missouri. Conference details are available at www.mostateparks.com/mobci/index.html.



Male Eastern Bluebird

State Fair exhibit to focus on landscaping for wildlife

Visitors to the Conservation Department exhibit at the 2005 Missouri State Fair will find a wealth of information about creating wildlife-friendly landscapes. Plantings around the grounds, photographic displays and children's programs will convey the importance of creating wildlife habitat. As always, the Conservation Department's area at the south end of the fairgrounds will offer aquariums with native fish, turtles and amphibians, plus displays of live snakes. Youngsters can spend time in the hands-on Discovery Room. The room also is a hit with adults who attend naturalist programs there in air-conditioned comfort. A new offering this year is the Operation Game Thief trailer and its displays of trophies and other items confiscated from poachers, along with information about how to stop poaching close to home.





Connected to Conservation: Field trip grants put kids in touch with nature

The reviews of the Conservation Department's field trip grant program are in, and they are glowing. Teachers, students and parents across the state say the program is making a positive difference in young Missourians' quality of learning and quality of life.

Comments from students included: "I will remember this forever because it helps me understand the ecosystem in my backyard! How cool is that?" and, "It will take me all night to tell my mom what I did here today."

The comments from teachers included: "For many of my urban children, this was the first time they had ever walked on a trail in the woods." and, "For our children in the special education department, this was a very special trip. None had ever been to the zoo, and the excitement on their faces was indescribable. This field trip would not have been possible without the assistance of the Missouri Department of Conservation."

The Conservation Department launched the program during the 2004–2005 school year to help cash-strapped schools provide educational enrichment. In all, schools in 84 counties received \$88,776 to help students learn first-hand about how people and nature interact. Eighty-eight percent of the money went to public schools. The remainder helped private and parochial schools get classes to conservation areas and other teaching locations.

Conservation Field Trip Grants are available for the 2005/06 school year. Details will be sent to elementary and secondary school principals in September.

LEARN MUSKIE FISHING FROM A PRO

Missouri anglers who dream of hooking a big muskellunge should check into an opportunity offered by the Pomme de Terre Chapter of Muskies, Inc. "Guide for a Day" events Sept. 17 and Oct. 15 will initiate

neophytes into the thrills of muskie fishing. The price is a \$100 donation to Muskies, Inc.

Proceeds will benefit Missouri muskie management. The price includes a guide for the day, boat, fuel, instruction and dinner. The guides are some of the best muskie fishermen in Missouri. For more information, contact Dean Dowdall, 417/852-4163, oldmusky@positech.net or Carl Marks, 417/745-2381. Registration is limited to 30 persons per event.



HABITAT HINT: Work now to create winter escape habitat

An hour's time and a chainsaw are all that's needed to help quail and other upland game survive through the coming winter. Brushy field edges are great for quail, but tree sprouts soon grow big enough to shade out low, shrubby plants that provide escape cover. Felling a few trees at intervals along fencerows and woodland edges lets sunlight in to spur new growth. Leaving trees where they fall creates instant escape cover.



Women anglers make a splash at Maramec Spring

It's 5 a.m., the sky is beginning to brighten, fog rises from the lake, and a group of women eagerly prepare to make their first casts of the day. They are part of a new organization, called Show-Me Women Fish!, that is helping women all over the state learn the joys of fishing. The nonprofit group promotes networking among women anglers and emphasizes mentorship of novices.

Show-Me Women Fish! seminars offer instruction by experts in all fishing styles in a non-intimidating setting. It also offers at least one major fishing get-together annually where participants explore new fishing areas. Between outings, members can share fishing experiences on the group's online forum, "Reel Women Fish Tails."

For more information, contact Sarah Holleran, 300 Florine, St. James, MO 65559, 573/261-0045, sholleran@showmewomenfish.com.



TURNING CHECK STATIONS INTO "CHECK IT OUT!" STATIONS

The advantages of Missouri's new Telecheck system for checking deer and turkeys are obvious. Making a phone call or going online is more convenient than driving miles to a physical check station, and the system will save taxpayers more than \$500,000.

The change does have a downside, however. Hunters will miss seeing one another's deer and trading stories.

That doesn't have to happen, though. Hunters will still want to gather. Businesses that find ways to bridge the divide between the past and present can transform check stations into "check-it-out" stations.

Ideas for making this transformation include:

- ▲ Provide a telephone or computer that hunters can use to Telecheck deer and turkeys.
- ▲ Display photos of hunters with their game on a "wall of fame."
- ▲ Provide scales and rulers to weigh and measure game.
- ▲ Set up a tent or other covered area with picnic tables where hunters can socialize.
- ▲ Work with local news media to promote these services.

AmerenUE settles suit to get new license

Wildlife, farmers and recreationists are the big winners in a lawsuit settlement announced in May. AmerenUE agreed to pay \$1.3 million for fish kills at its

Osage Hydroelectric Power Plant at Bagnell Dam. The kills affected fish in the Osage River and Lake of the Ozarks.

To ensure it would get a new, 40-year operating license from the Federal Energy

Regulatory Commission, the privately owned power company also agreed to spend millions of dollars to prevent or offset future wildlife and property damage. For more information about the settlement, visit www.missouriconservation.org/news/out/.



Conservation has new commissioner

Gov. Matt Blunt named a former Conservation Department employee to serve on the Conservation Commission. William F. "Chip" McGeehan, 55, worked summers as a fisheries assistant while earning his bachelor of science degree in fisheries and wildlife management at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Although McGeehan's career path led him away from the Conservation Department, he remains an avid bowhunter and angler. He also pursues his interest in wildlife management on a 1,000-acre ranch on the James River near Marshfield, where he runs 150 head of bison.

McGeehan, who lives in Marshfield, will be one of four Conservation Commissioners who have authority over the state's forest, fish and wildlife resources. He replaces Anita B. Gorman, Kansas City, whose term expired. His term runs until June 30, 2011.

"Being chosen for this appointment is a lifelong dream come true," McGeehan said.



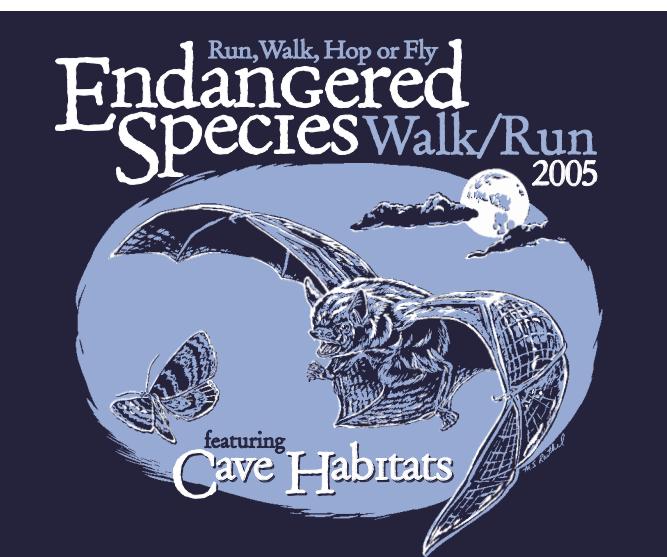
William F. "Chip" McGeehan

Missourians walk, run for endangered species

Missourians concerned about endangered bats and other animals will gather—rain or shine—in North Jefferson City Oct. 8 to take part in the Conservation Department's annual Endangered Species Walk/Run.

Race packets will be available starting at 8 a.m. at the North Jefferson City pavilion at the junction of highways 63 and 54. The race kicks off at 9 a.m. Participants may register for a 10K run, a 5K run or a 5K walk on a separate course.

Proceeds from the event will go to the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation to fund habitat restoration, research and education projects for endangered animals and plants in Missouri. For more information, visit www.missouriconservation.org/programs/es_walkrun/.



Outdoor Calendar

Hunting	open	close
Common Snipe	9/1/05	12/16/05
Coyotes	5/9/05	3/31/06
Crow	11/1/05	3/3/06
Deer		
Archery	9/15/05	11/11/05
	11/23/05	1/15/06
Urban Counties (antlerless only)	10/7/05	10/10/05
Youth	10/29/05	10/30/05
November	11/12/05	11/22/05
Muzzleloader	11/25/05	12/4/05
Antlerless	12/10/05	12/18/05
Dove	9/1/05	11/9/05
Furbearers	11/15/05	2/15/06
Groundhog	5/9/05	12/15/05
Pheasant		
North Zone	11/1/05	1/15/06
Southeast Zone	12/1/05	12/12/05
Rabbits	10/1/05	2/15/06
Ruffed Grouse	10/15/05	1/15/06
Sora and Virginia Rails	9/1/05	11/9/05
Squirrels	5/28/05	2/15/06
Teal (sunrise to sunset)	9/10/05	9/18/05
Turkey, archery	9/15/05	11/11/05
	11/23/05	11/15/06
Turkey, fall firearms	10/1/05	10/31/05
Woodcock	10/15/05	11/28/05

Fishing

Black Bass (most southern streams)	5/28/05	2/28/06
Bullfrog	sunset	midnight
	6/30/05	10/31/05
Gigging nongame fish	9/15/05	1/31/06
Trout Parks	3/1/05	10/31/05

Trapping

Beaver	11/15/05	3/31/06
Furbearers	11/15/05	2/15/06
Otters and Muskrats	11/15/05	varies

see regulations for otter zones season dates

For complete information about seasons, limits, methods and restrictions, consult the *Wildlife Code* and the current summaries of "Missouri Hunting and Trapping Regulations" and "Missouri Fishing Regulations", the "Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information," the "Waterfowl Hunting Digest" and the "Migratory Bird Hunting Digest." This information is on our Web site at www.missouriconservation.org/regs/.

The Conservation Department's computerized point-of-sale system allows you to purchase or replace your permits through local vendors or by phone. The toll-free number is 800/392-4115. Allow 10 days for delivery of telephone purchases. To purchase permits online go to <http://www.wildlifelicense.com/mo/>.

AGENT NOTEBOOK

While checking anglers at Thomas

Hill Lake, I came across a young boy and his father fishing. The child could not have been more than 4 years old. He had just caught his first fish. When I asked to see it, he proudly lifted the stringer from the water to reveal a 6-inch channel catfish.

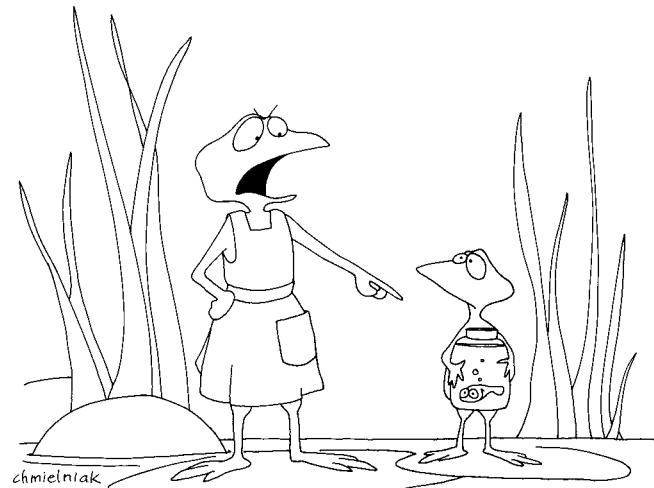
The boy was so excited he could hardly contain himself. He told me all about the fish he caught and kept going back to look at his catch. His father also was beaming with pride. I bet that was the first of many quality fishing trips they will take together.

When taking children fishing, choose locations where they can run around safely when they need to let off a little steam. It's also important to choose a place where the fish are pretty likely to bite. When the fishing is slow, children lose interest quickly. Eager, biting bluegill may be too small for the frying pan, but they are a blast for children to catch.

Do not plan on getting very much fishing done yourself. You will be too busy baiting hooks, untangling line, taking pictures and having fun. So what are you waiting for? Grab your fishing pole and take a child fishing. — *Chris Decoske, Randolph County*



To learn about bobwhite quail management and Missouri's quail recovery efforts, check out
www.missouriconservation.org
Keyword: quail

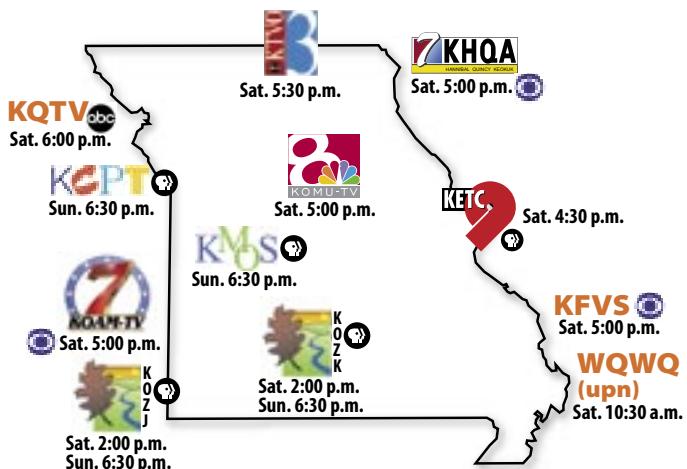


**"No, your class will not watch him turn into a frog.
Now take your baby brother out of that jar and
put him back where he belongs."**



Program Schedule

Television the way Nature intended!



SHOW SCHEDULE

Aug 6 & 7—CAVING

We're 'Just Kiddin' Around' down under...underground, that is...in Missouri's caves!

Aug 13 & 14—MUSICAL POSTCARD

Lose yourself in the beauty of nature, during this special edition of a musical postcard of Missouri.

Aug 20 & 21—LEWIS AND CLARK

Join the voyage of discovery as America's greatest explorers, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, set out on their historical adventure.

Aug 27 & 28—CURRENT RIVER

Explore the Current River by kayak...and a beautiful spring from the inside out, during our special kids edition of Missouri Outdoors.

Sep 3 & 4—REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Join kids for a closeup look at Missouri's reptiles and amphibians.

OTHER OUTLETS

(Previously aired episodes are also shown on the following)

Brentwood BTV-10 Brentwood City Television

Columbia Columbia Channel

Hillsboro JCTV

Independence City 7 Cable

Joplin KGCS

Kearney Unite Cable

Parkville GATV

Poplar Bluff Poplar Bluff City Cable

Ste. Genevieve Ste. Genevieve Cable

St. Charles SC20 City Cable

St. Louis Charter Cable

St. Louis Consolidated Schools Cable

St. Louis City TV 10

St. Peters St. Peters Cable

Springfield KBLE36/MediaCom

Sullivan Fidelity Cable

West Plains OCTV

Meet Our Contributors



Mark Goodwin teaches biology at Jackson Senior High School. He spends most of his free time hunting and fishing with friends and family. He says he dove hunts harvested grain fields in Cape Girardeau County and loves to fish Ozark streams.



Eric Kurzejeski lives in Columbia with his wife, Lori, children, Meghan, Jack and Eva, three dogs and a cat. When not serving as the Conservation Department's outreach programs chief, Eric spends time creating savannas and restoring native grasses on his land.



A native of Jefferson City, **Beverly Letchworth** is a freelance writer living in St. Louis, where she teaches creative writing at Meramec College. Her book, "Leafbird Days and Firefly Nights: Personal Renewal Through Nature Journaling," was recently published by Pen Central Press.



Jim Low is the Conservation Department's print news services coordinator. He saw his first wild otter at the outlet of Ha Ha Tonka Spring at Lake of the Ozarks at sunrise on a snowy January day in 2001.



Sheri Medlock is a naturalist at Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center, but she conducts programs for the deaf and hard of hearing throughout the state. Sheri lives in Lee's Summit and enjoys backpacking, photography and kayaking.



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Purple prairie clover

The small flowers of purple prairie clover bloom in woodlands, glades and prairies. Although not as showy as other sun-loving flowers, they do attract lots of small, native bees. Native bees receive much less attention than larger, non-native honeybees, but they are valuable pollinators of many wildflowers. —*Jim Rathert*